



TOWN OF BERWYN HEIGHTS

Prince George's County, Maryland

Incorporated in 1896 ~ Sixth Oldest Municipality in PG County

TOWN MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 9, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Calvo, CMs Almoguera, Dennison, and Kulpa-Eddy. Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Wilkinson had an absence. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Murphy, Chief of Police Antolik, Treasurer Lape, Clerk Harper and citizens.

Mayor Calvo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. MINUTES

Clerk Harper read a summary of the September 11 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Kulpa-Eddy, the minutes were approved.

2. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Lape gave the Treasurer's report for the month of August.

3. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Calvo thanked MPT Wilkinson for chairing the last worksession while he was on vacation. He came back in time for the government shut down, which is a challenge for many people in the Washington area and in Berwyn Heights. Looking at the federal government struggling to function makes him appreciate the situation in Berwyn Heights. This is a diverse community where people still know each other, and elected officials work together even if they disagree. As Mayor, he is proud of that the Council usually makes important decisions on a 5 to 0 vote.

In contrast to the federal, state and county governments, Berwyn Heights has also managed to get through a tough period of declining revenues without furlough layoffs. The Town made an effort to compensate its employees fairly and to remain competitive with surrounding municipalities. Money was set aside in this budget for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and merit increases.

Mayor Calvo continued that the Town Council during this term will make some consequential decisions about staffing with a vacancy in the code department to be filled and the retirement of the Town Administrator Murphy at the end of the fiscal year. The hiring of new leadership will give occasion to review how the Town government functions and what might be changed to keep up with the times.

In other news, Mayor Calvo said that this is a busy time of the year for community events. The Ice Cream Social in September was the best social he can remember and the Lake Artemesia concert attracted more people than last year. Tomorrow evening, the peace garden dedication will take place at Berwyn Heights Elementary School and next weekend will feature the Halloween party, Trunk or Treat, at the Community Center parking lot. The Council received good reviews of the program sent to residents with an events schedule for the remainder of the year, and may do this again in spring.

The sidewalks project continues to move forward, with engineering to be completed this fall, and construction hopefully taking place next spring. The 63rd A sidewalk at the Presbyterian Church, funded with a Safe Routes to School grant, is progressing apace, as are the plans for emergency generators at the Town Center. Mayor Calvo concluded with relating a compliment he received from an 8th grader in Greenbelt, who thought that Berwyn Heights has awesome playgrounds.

4. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Administration: CM Almoguera reported that the auditor is scheduled to come in on October 21 to review the FY 2013 audit. It is hoped that the audit will be completed in early November.

Code Compliance: CM Kulpa-Eddy reported that she attended the first of a series of Department of Environmental Resources (DER) workshops on the County's check rebate program. The program provides rebates to homeowners and businesses for managing storm water runoff from their properties by adopting one of the following best practices: adding rain barrels, rain gardens, or green roofs, planting trees, removing pavement or replacing it with permeable pavers. Workshops were held throughout the County during October and November. In this way, property owners can recoup some of the stormwater management fees recently added to their tax bills. CM Kulpa-Eddy encouraged all residents to participate in the program. More information is available on the DER website or by calling the County Information number 311.

Mayor Calvo added that the Director of DER Adam Ortiz will be at the next Four Cities Coalition meeting on October 23 in Greenbelt. He will talk principally about the proposed animal shelter in Northern Prince George's, but also about other DER programs. The meeting is open to the public.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: CM Dennison reported on recent and upcoming events. She noted that, on October 10, the peace garden was dedicated at Berwyn Heights Elementary School, followed by an anti-bullying session hosted by the PTA. On October 25, the school will hold its annual walk-a-thon fundraiser and on October 26, a school garden cleanup and plant exchange will take place. The Town-wide cleanup is scheduled for November 9, the His Committee's Veteran's Day wine and cheese reception for November 10, and the Tree Lighting on December 7. The Traveling Garden project, which recycles beautiful gardens in Town, is ongoing and will conclude with a wine and cheese reception in January.

Public Health and Safety: Chief Antolik gave the police activities report for September. There were 6 Part I offenses, including one burglary and 1 stolen vehicle. The total is below the 5 year average of 10. The year-to-date total is 43, which is also below the 5 year average of 67. Other activity included the issuance of 67 citations, 22 safety repair orders, 56 Town citations, 49 warnings, as well as 371 speed camera tickets. Chief Antolik said he is working with the speed camera vendor OptoTraffic on refunding tickets that may have been issued in error.

Chief Antolik further explained that the burglary he mentioned was in a vacant house where copper pipes were stolen. He asked residents to keep an eye on suspicious activities at vacant homes and to report them to the police. Lastly, he offered a list of tips for a safe Halloween and trick-or-treating, ranging from dressing oneself visible with reflective clothing, glow necklaces and flashlights to being accompanied by a trusted adult. The police and Neighborhood Watch will be out force patrolling.

Mayor Calvo noted that the police report included one citation for texting while driving. Chief Antolik confirmed that this was made a primary offense and starting October 1, drivers can be cited for talking on a cell phone or texting. However, hands-free phoning is permitted.

Public Works: There was no report as MPT Wilkinson was absent. TA Murphy announced that curbside leaf pickup will begin on November 1, and that the sweeper will be in Town the last week of November and the first week of December. Residents are requested not to park in the street if possible.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Green Team: Mayor Calvo reported that the Green Team has settled on a preferred site for a community garden and is preparing a presentation for the Town Council.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: CM Kulpa-Eddy reported that CERT workshops are going to be held on October 19-20 in Laurel and on November 10 in Cheverly. Those interested in receiving community emergency response training should contact the NW/EP committee. The NW/EP will again assist the patrol the Town on Halloween night and hand out glow sticks and necklaces to help everyone stay safe. The next meeting will take place on November 6.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 8-2013 - 63rd Avenue School Zone Designation: Clerk Harper read the Resolution. Mayor Calvo said that this Resolution implements a new school zone on 63rd Avenue between Pontiac and Tecumseh Street and between Seminole Street and Greenbelt Road. This disjointed school zone covers the approaches to Berwyn Heights Elementary School and Greenbelt Middle school and is intended to make it safer for students to walk to these schools as well as to school bus stops on Pontiac Street. The speed limit in the school zones will be lowered to 15 mph between 7 am and 6 pm when school is in session. At this time, it is unlikely that speed cameras will be set up in these blocks as they do not have a high traffic volume.

At 8:50 p.m., Mayor Calvo opened the public hearing. TA Murphy and CM Kulpa-Eddy clarified that the school zone only covers the 8600 and 8900 block of 63rd Avenue. The Resolution does not designate 63rd Avenue between Quebec Street and Tecumseh as a school zone. With no further comments, the public hearing was closed.

CM Almoguera commented that she fully supports the new school zones, which are intended to protect children and parents walking to school. She believes the signage indicating a school zone will make drivers more alert and help call attention to pedestrians.

CM Dennison said she favors the new school zones, because these blocks do not have sidewalks and a lower speed limit will make it safer for students to walk to school. CM Kulpa-Eddy said that she, too, supports the new school zones, which are used by students to walk to school. The signage should help draw extra attention to pedestrians and reduce speeding, although it would be hard to reach a speed greater than 20 mph if one stops at the stop signs posted at each end of these blocks. Mayor Calvo noted that MPT Wilkinson was the first to push for the new school zone designations and would strongly favor their adoption if he were here.

CM Dennison moved and CM Almoguera seconded to adopt the Resolution. The Council voted 4 to 0 in favor of adoption.

8. CITIZENS DISCUSSION

There was none.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Signed: Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk

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